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Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7394th meeting
Thursday, 26 February 2015, 3.35 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Wang Min	(China)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Chad	Mr. Gombo
	Chile	Mr. Olguín Cigarroa
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Lithuania	Ms. Jakubonė
	Malaysia	Mr. Haniff
	New Zealand	Mr. McLay
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/124)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/124)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/124, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014).

I now give the floor to Ms. Kyung-wha Kang.

Ms. Kang: On behalf of Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos, I would like to deliver the following statement.

As Syria enters its fifth year of conflict, violence and brutality continue unabated and with total impunity. The indiscriminate use of explosive weapons in populated areas by all parties claimed more lives this month and displaced thousands. Government aerial bombardments, including the use of barrel bombs, and attacks by armed opposition groups have intensified in many areas, including Aleppo, Dar'a and rural Damascus. The parties to the conflict continue to kill civilians and target civilians and civilian infrastructure, including vital public services such as water and electricity, in blatant disregard of resolution 2139 (2014) and international humanitarian law, condemning people to further unnecessary suffering. Over 2 million people in Aleppo and Dar'a governorates have been affected by the wilful denial of water and electricity by parties to the conflict this month. Of the 212,000 people who are besieged in conditions that deteriorate every day, only 304 were reached with food in January. Those 304 were in Yarmouk, where 18,000 people are in desperate need.

In the other besieged locations, the parties continued to restrict access severely. The requests to deliver assistance to people in east Ghouta, which were mentioned in our previous statement to the Council (see S/PV.7369), were denied by the Government — nor could we deliver to the towns of Nubul or Zahraa, which have been besieged by opposition forces since May 2014.

In Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has closed down the offices of several organizations, including the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, a key implementing partner. Some 600,000 people have not received food assistance in those governorates since December 2014. The sick or wounded often have nowhere safe to get treatment. According to Physicians for Human Rights, there were four attacks on medical facilities in January, and five medical staff were killed. On 23 February, a car bomb reportedly killed at least four civilians in the parking area of a hospital in Qardaha, Latakia governorate.

There are continued challenges to the provision of medical supplies, in particular surgical items. However, in one development, the World Health Organization (WHO) succeeded in sending life-saving medicine and medical supplies this week from Damascus to hospitals and public health centres in the eastern part of Aleppo city and rural Aleppo, for approximately 60,500 medical treatments.

At the same time, WHO surgical items, UNICEF midwifery and diarrhoea kits, and United Nations Population Fund reproductive health kits were removed by Government security personnel from an inter-agency convoy travelling to Al-Wa'er, in Homs governorate. This follows a previous refusal to allow medical supplies into Al-Wa'er in November.

Every month we report on the same violations; the numbers change but the pattern remains the same. The parties to the conflict continue to act with impunity, killing and abducting civilians, denying access and removing vital supplies from convoys. This pattern

must be broken. Specifically, the siege that currently affects 212,000 people must be lifted. We must ensure that everyone in all parts of Syria has access to medical supplies, including surgical supplies. The use of blockades of humanitarian aid and of basic services, including water and electricity, must stop, as must the indiscriminate attacks on civilians, including through barrel bombs, which have come to characterize this conflict.

The Council must do everything in its power to hold the parties accountable and achieve the aforementioned changes. Resolution 2139 (2014) is extensive in its scope, and the Council's concerns and recommendations, as set out in the resolution, must be respected.

Humanitarian organizations operating from within Syria and from neighbouring countries continue to reach millions of people in need month after month. Last month, some 3.4 million people were reached with food assistance while hundreds of thousands were also reached with medicines, household items and other supplies. Cross-border shipments by the United Nations and partners have increased since the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014). Some 950,000 people have been reached with food, 880,000 with critical household items, 340,000 with water and sanitation, and nearly 470,000 with medical supplies. This complements and is in addition to the existing non-governmental organization programmes that again reached over a million people last month. But it is not enough. More effort must be made to de-escalate the violence, protect people and enable humanitarian organizations to give greater support.

We are encouraged by the efforts made by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Staffan de Mistura, to secure a freeze in fighting in some parts of Aleppo. In hopes that the freeze will materialize, humanitarian agencies have developed plans to scale up aid deliveries throughout the eastern part of Aleppo City. Our plans include the provision of emergency food and other supplies and the rehabilitation of basic services, including electricity and waste management, removal of debris, getting children back into school, and repairing and renovating damaged homes. Humanitarian agencies are already delivering assistance in Aleppo but much more needs to be done. The United Nations will make use of any additional opportunities, including through the freeze, to expand humanitarian access.

However, we are extremely concerned that two staff members of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, doing essential work with opposition parties on the ground to secure access for the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian supplies, have been asked to leave the country without any reason given. This will hinder our work tremendously. We call upon the Government of Syria to reverse its decision so that we are able to continue our life-saving work for all Syrians in need.

In addition to the many operational constraints we face, including insecurity and interference by the parties to the conflict, our response cannot keep up with the needs of Syria's people because we do not have enough funding. By the end of last year, the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan for 2014 was just 48 per cent funded. We cannot afford the dire consequences of failing to meet those needs. We can do more, if we have more money to do so. Lack of funding has already forced the World Food Programme to reduce food rations by 30 per cent. In the longer term, if we do not receive what we need, we will only be able to provide food to the extremely vulnerable. For every $1 million the WHO cannot raise in Syria, some 227,000 people lose vital health services, and unless urgent funding is received before May 2015, a million children who are out of school will not be able to have access to alternative education options. Malnutrition programmes for up to a million children will have to be halted or reduced.

The humanitarian community has come together to bring all operations in Syria — cross-line and cross-border — under one single response plan for 2015. This will enable better identification of needs to allow for a more effective response. But in order for it to work, we need the resources. Kuwait has generously agreed to host a third pledging conference for Syrians in need on 31 March. We need high-level representation at that conference and meaningful pledges that will make a difference on the ground. We look to the members of the Security Council to show leadership to end the barbaric and brutal warfare in Syria. We are running out of words to describe the terrible human and humanitarian consequences.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ms. Kang for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Guterres.

Mr. Guterres: Briefing the Security Council in 2013 (see S/PV.7000), I said that the war in Syria had not only unleashed the worst humanitarian crisis of our

times but it was also posing a terrible threat to regional and global peace and security. This is the reality we face today.

Iraq saw the most frightening and complete spillover of an internal conflict into a neighbouring country in recent history. Lebanon has been on near-permanent security alert, and there have been increasing threats even to Jordan in the past months. As many as 20,000 foreign fighters from over 50 countries have reportedly travelled to Syria and Iraq since 2011, with their number nearly doubling during the course of last year.

Meanwhile, the Syrian refugee crisis has overwhelmed existing response capacities, with 3.8 million registered refugees in the neighbouring countries. Lebanon and Jordan have seen their populations grow in the space of a few years to a point they were prepared to reach only in several decades. One third of the Lebanese population today is Palestinian or Syrian. Jordan is facing a similar challenge. Turkey has now become the biggest refugee-hosting country in the world. In addition, more than 2 million Iraqis were internally displaced in 2014 and some 220,000 sought refuge in other countries.

The continued growth in displacement is staggering. But at the same time the nature of the refugee crisis is now changing. As the level of despair rises and the available protection space shrinks, we are approaching a dangerous turning point. After years in exile, refugees' resources were depleted long ago, and their living conditions are drastically deteriorating. I have met middle-class families with children who are barely surviving on the streets and are praying to make it through the winter. Well over half of Syrian refugees in Lebanon are living in insecure dwellings — up from a third last year — and a survey of 40,000 Syrian families in Jordan found that two-thirds were living below the absolute poverty line. One father of four compared life as a refugee to being stuck in quicksand — every time he moves, he sinks further. With humanitarian appeals systematically underfunded, there is simply not enough assistance.

At the same time, host communities are severely overstretched. The refugee influx has had a heavy impact on the economies and societies, mostly of Lebanon, Jordan and northern Iraq, overwhelming social services, infrastructure and Government resources. International support is far from keeping pace with the magnitude of the needs. As host countries face growing security risks due to the regional spread of the conflict and do not get the help they need to cope with the refugee influx, Syrians are finding it increasingly difficult to reach safety.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) monthly registration figures in Lebanon have dropped nearly 80 per cent compared with early 2014, and the number of people entering Jordan has also dropped substantially. Meanwhile, it is important to underline that refugees continue to cross the border into Turkey in significant numbers. The Turkish budget has already spent around $6 billion in direct assistance to Syrian refugees, and, in a landmark decision last year, the Turkish Government's temporary protection decree gave Syrians access to the country's labour market as well as to free education and health care.

But in the global context I described, it is no surprise that growing desperation is forcing more and more Syrian refugees to move further afield. The dramatic situation in the Mediterranean illustrates this, with Syrians accounting for one third of the nearly 220,000 boat arrivals last year.

With the refugee situation growing more protracted and more desperate, almost 2 million Syrian refugees under 18 risk becoming a lost generation. Many of the over 100,000 refugee children born in exile could face the risk of statelessness. If this issue is not properly addressed, this crisis in the making could have huge consequences for the future not only of Syria but of the whole region.

As humanitarian resources dwindle, abandoning refugees to hopelessness only exposes them to even greater suffering, exploitation and dangerous abuse. Abandoning their hosts to manage the situation on their own could result in serious regional destabilization and more security concerns elsewhere in the world.

It should be obvious that in order to prevent this and to preserve the protection space in the region, refugees and host countries need massive international support. The regional refugee and resilience plan aims to bring together the humanitarian and longer-term efforts of host Governments and over 200 United Nations and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners. Its programmes are designed to be funded not only from humanitarian but increasingly from development cooperation budgets.

I hope that the upcoming Kuwait III conference will play a determining role in stabilizing the situation

in the refugee-hosting countries. Beyond the immediate humanitarian priorities, it is crucial that development actors fund the plan's resilience pillar and the host Governments' plans. Countries such as Lebanon and Jordan need much more financial assistance, not only to local refugee-hosting communities, but also through Government budget support for the necessary structural investments in health-care systems, education, water and electricity supply, and other public infrastructure, which is cracking under the tremendous pressure.

As discussed at length during the Berlin Conference, the Syrian situation illustrates the inadequacies of today's development cooperation policies at a time of multiplying conflicts. To address this, bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as international financial institutions, should review existing criteria and priorities. It is absurd, for example, that Lebanon and Jordan have no access to World Bank grants because they are considered middle-income countries.

As High Commissioner for Refugees, it breaks my heart to see Syrian families fleeing from a horrible war, forced to risk their lives again, on unsafe boats, to find protection in Europe. Since the start of 2015, more than 370 people have died trying to cross the Mediterranean; that is one person drowning for every 20 who make it. But Italy's Mare Nostrum operation has ended, and the European Union's Triton initiative is limited in both mandate and resources. Europe must step up its capacity to save lives with a robust search-and-rescue operation in the Central Mediterranean, or thousands more, including many, many Syrians, will perish.

To reduce the number of people getting on boats in the first place, more legal avenues are needed for Syrians to seek protection in third countries. Several States provide resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes, but the needs far exceed available spaces. We believe that one tenth of Syrian refugees would require resettlement as an adequate solution to their protection situation.

Flexible visa policies, expanded family reunification, academic scholarships and private-sponsor schemes must complement these measures. Following the example of countries such as Germany and Sweden, other States in Europe and the Gulf region should consider offering legal access, with more opportunities, so as to alleviate some of the pressure on Syria's neighbours and give more refugees an alternative way of reaching safety.

Without such alternatives, the number of people taking to the seas will continue to grow. Not only are they facing serious human rights violations at the hands of smugglers and traffickers; we now also see armed groups threatening to enter the smuggling business for their own purposes of sowing fear.

This should remind us that protecting refugees also means tackling racism and xenophobia. In today's climate of rising panic, it worries me deeply that refugees are becoming mixed up with security concerns, confronting hostility in places where they thought they were safe. In several public debates, they have been made scapegoats for any number of problems, from terrorism to economic hardship and perceived threats to their host communities' way of life. But we need to remember that the primary threat is not from refugees, but to them.

Syrians are now the biggest refugee population under UNHCR's mandate. As their number keeps growing and they become more vulnerable, the serious repercussions this has across the region only highlight the obvious: the urgent need for the international community to bring together all key actors and put an end to the conflict. There are no winners in this war; everyone is losing. But the highest price is being paid by the refugees and the other innocent victims inside the country.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Guterres for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mrs. Kawar (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to thank you for having facilitated the taking up of this item at an open meeting in order to shed light on the various dimensions of the humanitarian crisis in Syria, the largest humanitarian crisis in the world today. It is important that the international community be aware of the deliberations in the Security Council in order to know how to respond to this crisis and its implications for neighbouring countries and security in the region.

I should like also to thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs not only for the assistance they have given Jordan to help it deal with this humanitarian crisis, but also for all the efforts they have made.

The crisis in Syria has been raging for more than four years now. The Jordanian people feels the pain of the Syrian people and continues to work, along with the Government, to find a political solution to the crisis. I will not repeat what is stated in the reports of the United Nations and of non-governmental organizations on the situation in Syria. Words cannot describe the magnitude of the tragedy and the suffering of women and children.

I wish to stress today the need for the international community to break its silence regarding the heinous acts and atrocities committed in Syria, including attacks against civilians and public infrastructure such as hospitals and water and electricity supplies, with full impunity. We must also emphasize once again how important it is that the parties to the conflict, including the Syrian regime, end the use of barrel bombs, which is a flagrant violation of humanitarian law. All the parties must commit to complying with humanitarian law and the relevant Security Council resolutions by ending this practice.

I also believe that the international community should increase its efforts to enable humanitarian aid to reach the more than 12 million Syrians in Syria who need it, particularly in the areas under siege. For its part, Jordan is committed to implementing all the relevant Security Council resolutions designed to mitigate the humanitarian situation in cooperation with France and Spain. We are also working to achieve adoption of other resolutions aimed at saving lives. Jordan will continue to facilitate the passage of humanitarian convoys through the Ramtha corridor, and we call on the United Nations and its partners to take as much advantage as possible of the resources made available to them by Jordan in making use of this humanitarian corridor.

The humanitarian crisis has continued to worsen, increasingly exacerbated as it is by extremism and terrorism, and is taking a heavy toll on the countries of the region, which are having to take in an unending number of refugees. We have opened our doors to Syrians since the beginning of the crisis, when Jordanians took Syrians into their own homes, before we had built refugee camps, one of which is now the size of Jordan's fourth-largest city. We are currently hosting a million refugees and providing them with as much as is in our power. I would like to emphasize various concepts that Jordan has been highlighting since the Berlin Conference on the Syrian Refugee Situation, particularly that of fatigue. Not just donor fatigue — because we have still not been able to supply all the aid that the refugees need — no, I am talking about the fatigue of Syria's neighbours. Jordan has been exhausted by the assistance it has given to the Syrian refugees.

Now more than ever, we urge the international community to shoulder its responsibility to help Jordan and the other countries sheltering Syria's refugees to take them in and provide them with what they need. We are grateful to Kuwait for volunteering to organize a donor conference, and we call on all the relevant parties to participate. We also call for implementation of the final declaration of the Berlin Conference, which emphasized economic, social and humanitarian needs and security issues in the countries bordering Syria. We stress that it is vital that countries help to find a solution to resettling the refugees.

There can be no humanitarian solution to the crisis in Syria. The only solution is political, one that can enable the country to begin a political transition that can re-establish security and stability, restore social cohesion among Syria's peoples and reinstate a safe environment so that Syrian citizens can return home. In the absence of a political solution, extremism will spread around the region and destroy it. We stress that it is vital that peaceful solutions be found, and we urge the various countries involved to continue to seek them, in accordance with the Geneva final communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and Egypt's efforts. We also call on the various entities of the United Nations to continue to work to settle the crisis in Syria. We also support the plan of Special Envoy de Mistura aimed at ending the violence and enabling humanitarian aid to reach the region.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): I would particularly like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Kang and High Commissioner Guterres for their very helpful briefings to the Council.

Last Sunday, 22 February, marked the first anniversary of resolution 2139 (2014), whereby the Council took action to reduce the suffering of the Syrian people. And yet, as our briefers just confirmed so graphically, one year later, much of resolution 2139 (2014) is being ignored by the parties to the conflict, particularly the Syrian Government. Indiscriminate attacks, including with barrel bombs, have continued with devastating impact on civilians on the ground. Around 212,000 people remain besieged, administrative hurdles impede humanitarian access and Government

security personnel remove surgical and medical supplies from humanitarian convoys, as Assistant Secretary-General Kang told us. Serious violations and abuses of international humanitarian and human-rights law continue, with direct impact on humanitarian assistance and access. All that is unacceptable, and the Security Council must do more to ensure that its own resolution is implemented. We cannot stand by as if we were spectators to this unfolding tragedy.

The first step must be to retain the attention of the international community, through the Council, on the full range of humanitarian issues that arise under resolution 2139 (2014); to break the silence, as Jordan urged us. With the Syrian crisis now in its fifth year, it has become business as usual, to quote the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/124). While complacency and fatigue are risks, they are simply unacceptable when facing a humanitarian crisis on this scale.

Monthly briefings on the humanitarian situation in Syria help to keep the crisis on the Security Council's radar. But New Zealand believes we need to reinvigorate those proceedings by making them more thematic in scope. As a specific step, we propose that going forward, the monthly briefers should focus on certain specific humanitarian challenges. As a starting point, they could be the five challenges identified by the Secretary-General in his report — ensuring access for medical and surgical supplies; lifting the siege on 212,000 people; ending the practice of using denial of key services as a weapon of war; rebuilding Syria's education system and addressing the indiscriminate attacks on civilians, including through the use of barrel bombs. We also support having briefings from other relevant speakers, in addition to the Office of Humanitarian Affairs, such as this month's report from High Commissioner Guterres. We would welcome continuing that initiative in future months by inviting other speakers.

As both Assistant Secretary-General Kang and High Commissioner Guterres emphasized, funding for the humanitarian response inside Syria has not kept pace with the scale of the needs. New Zealand therefore welcomes next month's international humanitarian pledging conference for Syria in Kuwait, to be hosted by the Amir of Kuwait. We commend the generosity and commitment of neighbouring countries, notably Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Egypt, in assisting the more than 3.8 million people who have had to flee Syria. Government services and local community services are under immense strain in all of those countries.

Last month, New Zealand's Foreign Minister visited Jordan, where he saw first-hand the impact on host communities and the plight of those who have had to flee, particularly children. Following his visit, New Zealand announced a NZ$1 million contribution to deliver basic education and skills training to more than 1,800 vulnerable young people in Jordan. Overall, New Zealand is extremely concerned both about the more than 2.1 million children inside Syria itself who are currently either out of school or attending classes irregularly, and about the long-term impact of the collapse of the school system. From previously having a school attendance rate of almost 100 per cent, Syria now has the second lowest in the world. About 670,000 children are being deprived of education following the closing of schools by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, or Daesh. We know that disaffected, ill-educated youth are more likely to join radical groups and to take up arms, with obvious destabilizing consequences for the whole region. There are also worrying reports from recent evacuees from Ghouta of minors being forcibly recruited by non-State armed groups.

In neighbouring countries, almost 2 million Syrian children are living as refugees, placing a heavy burden on local education systems. Almost half of all Syrian children living as refugees remained out of school through the 2013-2014 school year. Having lost their schools, having lost their homes, these children are now also losing their chance to build a future. The High Commissioner described them as the "lost generation".

Let me come back to Security Council resolution 2139 (2013). One year after its adoption, the Council must now take a leadership role and address the very serious gaps in the implementation of that resolution. New Zealand commits to working with other Council members, stakeholder countries and those on the ground to determine what we can do to ensure that the Council's own resolution — our express wishes — are fully implemented with no "ifs", "buts", "maybes", prevarication or bureaucratic blockages. We commit to finding ways to maintain pressure on the parties concerned to abide by international law. In parallel, we will continue to support the Council's renewed focus on the political track, without which there can be no resolution of this humanitarian crisis.

New Zealand welcomes initiatives to give momentum to a political solution based on the Geneva

communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), including the recent meetings in Cairo and Moscow, and we commend those who initiated those processes. Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura's freeze proposal is also important. Modest in scope, it still offers the best short-term chance to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. We now look for action, not words, from the Syrian Government and the other parties to the conflict, in working with the Special Envoy to implement that proposal. The Council should stand ready to show the leadership urged on us by Assistant Secretary-General Kang, and to act if that action is not forthcoming.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank both Ms. Kang and Mr. Guterres for their briefings. The work they are undertaking, together with the humanitarian personnel of the United Nations and other organizations, with a view to alleviating the suffering of the Syrian population is remarkable and worthy of our respect, admiration and appreciation.

Since 2011, 72 humanitarian personnel working in Syria have died, including 17 United Nations staff members. We believe that we owe them, their loved ones and all the victims of this conflict more than words. We are determined to ensure that their sacrifice will not have been in vain and that it serves to bring peace to Syria.

All Council members know that the solution to the Syrian conflict is a political rather than military one. We all know that humanitarian assistance and protection for victims are a moral, legal imperative. However, they are not enough to put an end to the suffering of the civilian population. They will not be enough until the parties involved cease to commit war crimes, abuses and massive violations of human rights and humanitarian law. In that regard, we will never tire of saying that the primary responsibility to protect its own population lies with the Syrian regime, and that all parties are required to comply with the exigencies of international humanitarian law. I believe that we all recognize that the humanitarian dimension, which is absolutely necessary, should not serve as a pretext to shirk or justify our collective failure to find a political resolution to this crisis.

Having said all of this, and despite our limitations, there are reasons for hope. Overcoming our differences from last year, we have been able to reach agreement on an essential issue, and have adopted resolution 2139 (2014). One of the objectives of that resolution was that humanitarian aid should arrive as quickly and efficiently as possible to those most in need. To that end, the Security Council adopted resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) . The border crossings were opened and, though limited, they have nevertheless proven to be effective in helping difficult-to-access areas and populations.

The aforementioned resolutions contain humanitarian standards to which all parties to the Syrian conflict must comply, and which the international community is compelled to enforce. We know that this is not happening. The successive reports of the Secretary-General have duly and fairly recalled the repeated failures to comply with these resolutions. If this type of debate and such reports have a purpose, it is to remind us of the obligations we have assumed. I am not concerned by the fatigue that this could cause. It is a fatigue that I am willing to take on, and that cannot be compared to the suffering of the victims whom we are unable to help.

What concerns me is that today, a year after the adoption of resolution 2139 (2014), barrel bombs and mortars continue to be used against civilian populations. What concerns me is that there are still more than 200,000 individuals under siege and used as hostages in Ghouta, Yarmouk, Nubul and Zahraa, and that access to essential services, such as water, continues to be used as a weapon of war. What concerns me is the continued failure to respect the responsibility to protect schools and hospitals, and that surgical and sanitary material are unfairly removed from humanitarian convoys before reaching their destination. I am concerned that thousands of minors are being recruited to fight, and that the rights of hundreds of thousands of women and girls continue to be systematically violated.

What worries me the most is that the Security Council is acting as a passive spectator of this situation. In his report, the Secretary-General has said that "the conflict has become business as usual" (*S/2015/124, p. 10*). It is terrifying to hear such a thing. We have the responsibility to respond, and Spain will do all it can to that end.

I should like to propose a pragmatic approach aimed at ensuring that the Council's action has a real impact on the ground, so that it can contribute, howsoever minimally, to mitigating the desperation of 12 million people. This approach has three phases that should be rolled out simultaneously.

First, we must identify the instruments at the Council's disposal to ensure that the parties to the

conflict comply with the exigencies of resolution 2139 (2014). Secondly, it is essential that we determine our priorities. The Secretary-General lays out five areas in which progress is urgently required. Spain believes that those are indeed the areas on which the Council should focus its efforts. Thirdly and lastly, we must clearly state that the action of the Council and its good offices should not only be extended to the parties to the conflict, but to all actors, including Member States, that can bring influence to bear on the parties.

I will conclude, but not without first calling attention to the following point. Some time ago, the Syrian conflict became a regional problem due, among other reasons, to the enormous number of Syrian refugees who spilled over the borders with neighbouring countries. The United Nations system must adapt its priorities. We are clearly facing a humanitarian crisis that has a direct impact on the development of the region as a whole. For that reason, the agencies of the system should set aside business as usual and rapidly adapt themselves to the new needs of the communities and refugee-hosting countries. Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt in particular are making enormous efforts, for which we must thank them. We must support them not merely in words, but with deeds. The upcoming Kuwait conference, to be held on 31 March, will offer an excellent opportunity to do just that. Ensuring its success would be a way to show that we mean what we say. We owe it to the victims of the Syrian conflict and to the societies that are hosting them at great sacrifice.

Mr. Gombo (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would like to commend you, Mr. President, for convening this open meeting on the situation in Syria. I would also like to thank Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for their detailed briefings.

The Syrian conflict will soon enter its fifth year, as the security situation continues to deteriorate and the humanitarian toll becomes worse by the day, with more than 200,000 civilians dead and a high number of refugees and internally displaced persons, without real prospects for a political settlement. Bombs, mortar attacks, explosive devices, along with a lack of food and water, are becoming the daily plight of civilians in Syria. It is unacceptable that the parties to the conflict continue to violate human rights and to target peaceful civilians and infrastructure. All parties must respect the rules of international humanitarian law and the relevant provisions of resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). The Government of Syria has the obligation under international law to ensure the free movement of assistance and access to vulnerable populations, as well as the protection of humanitarian workers and their facilities.

With the increasing deterioration of the humanitarian situation, the international community must do more, be united and bring pressure to bear on all the Syrian parties to lift the obstacles to humanitarian assistance and allow unhindered access to all areas in need. We would like to pay well-deserved tribute to all United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners, who are carrying out their work under very difficult and often dangerous circumstances. We encourage the international community to increase its assistance and to do more to support United Nations humanitarian agencies in order to allow them to help populations, in particular during the winter, which is especially harsh in the area.

We continue to think that there are no military solutions to the Syrian conflict and that it is vital to actively search for an appropriate political solution that would put an end to the suffering of the people. Against that backdrop, Chad supports the tireless efforts of Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, who is doing his utmost to negotiate with the parties in Aleppo to provide better humanitarian access and to clear the way for an exit out of the crisis. Chad also supports the efforts made recently by Russia and Egypt, which made it possible to bring together Syrian stakeholders to seek political solutions to the crisis.

In conclusion, we underscore that the humanitarian tragedy in Syria should tug at our collective conscience. All regional and international efforts should be geared towards finding solutions. We believe that a comprehensive and definitive solution to the Syrian conflict should also address terrorism in the region, which is a serious threat to international peace and security.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for their briefings. We would also like to reiterate our appreciation for the outstanding work done by the teams of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees and other United Nations agencies on the ground, as well as all their partners, who are carrying out their duties at risk to their lives. It is unacceptable that humanitarian workers in Syria are being targeted, attacked, abducted and killed: 72 workers have died since March 2011, and I would like to pay tribute to them.

As of 15 March, the conflict in Syria will have been going on for four years. Yet, in report after report, it is unfortunately clear that the humanitarian situation is deteriorating at an alarming rate and that there is no end in sight to the crisis. Despite the Council's strong message to the Syrian regime and the armed groups, through the renewal of the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Syria and its reminder to the parties to the conflict of their obligation to respect international humanitarian law, the situation remains dire, as was forcefully alluded to by Ms. Kang and Mr. Guterres.

The statistics are unassailable: 220,000 dead, 12.2 million people in need of assistance, 7.6 million internally displaced persons, 3.8 million refugees, 4.8 million in areas that are hard to reach and 212,000 people besieged without the means to survive. Aerial bombardment, including the indiscriminate use of barrels bombs by Government forces, continue to claim civilian lives. The recent report by Human Rights Watch states that, since February 2014, the Government has bombed at least 450 sites in the region of Dara'a and 1,000 sites in Aleppo using barrels bombs. The parties to the conflict also continue to deliberately target civilian facilities and property, including infrastructure and vital services and hospitals, which is contrary to all the rules of humanitarian law, respect for human dignity and the most basic principles of humankind. The deliberate interference in humanitarian operations, the limits imposed on access to assistance throughout the country and the administrative obstruction by the regime only exacerbate the suffering of a battered people. This must stop. The obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance to besieged areas, blocking cross-border access and the proliferation of bureaucratic obstacles are practices contrary to Security Council resolutions. Moreover, pursuant to resolution 2139 (2014), an end must be put to impunity to violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. Those responsible for such violations in Syria must be brought to justice.

The conclusions of the latest report (S/2015/124) on the implementation of resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) are clear. They call for immediate action by the parties to the conflict, including the lifting of the various sieges, which affect 212,000 people, removing obstacles to the delivery of medical and surgical equipment, ending the use of basic services, such as water and electricity, as a weapon of war and halting indiscriminate attacks against civilians, especially the use of barrels bombs. As we know, there are many obstacles. We must all collectively bring pressure to bear on the Syrian regime to immediately remove the obstacles to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people.

The current situation in Aleppo and Ghouta only shows that the regime remains deaf to the calls of the international community. The bombings carried out by Government forces in early February in Ghouta, east of Damascus, left more than 200 dead and 1,000 wounded. France condemned those bombings in the strongest way, while recalling that they violated the most basic principles of international humanitarian law and could constitute war crimes.

Whatever the measures taken to limit the cost of the conflict in human lives and reduce the people's suffering, the humanitarian tragedy in Syria can end only with the emergence of a political solution. The conditions must therefore be created for a political solution. First of all, the regime must immediately cease aerial bombardment, the use of barrel bombs and indiscriminate shelling targeting civilians, which are prohibited by the resolutions of the Security Council. Secondly, our objective remains, more than ever, to promote a genuine political transition, based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex), and not a simple makeover for the regime. Through its brutal repression and rejection of any transition over the past four years, Bashar Al-Assad has fanned the flamed of extremism and chaos. As long as Bashar Al-Assad remains in power, ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front will continue to grow in strengthen. Renewed commitment on the part of the United Nations to a resumption of the political process is essential in this regard. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, must, of course, play an important role in this regard.

A focused dialogue on the terms of a political transition based on the Geneva communiqué must be resumed bringing together the major parties concerned among the international community. We must also support the reconciliation initiatives of the various

components of the Syrian Opposition around the Syrian National Coalition. Without a moderate Opposition that is strong and credible, no political transition will be able to succeed. To achieve any lasting improvement in the humanitarian situation in Syria will require a political solution that will itself require the decisive commitment of the Security Council.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Kang and High Commissioner Guterres for their powerful presentations.

One year ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 2139 (2014), aimed at addressing the humanitarian and human rights catastrophe in Syria. As today's briefings made clear, the humanitarian crises have only deepened. There are multiple crises. It is estimated that 12.2 million people need humanitarian assistance in Syria. At this time last year, 9.3 million people were said to need humanitarian assistance. That is nearly 3 million more people who need aid to survive, in just a year. Let us think about that. That is why it is absolutely crucial that all donors make generous commitments at the humanitarian pledging conference in Kuwait in March; commitments that are commensurate with the magnitude of Syria's crisis. That is what the United States plans to do.

While the international community absolutely must meet the immediate and dire needs of the Syrian people, we must also face the fact that humanitarian assistance is a band-aid: it must be accompanied by more intense political pressure to stop the violence and widespread abuses that are fuelling the crisis.

Although more people in Syria need humanitarian aid than ever before, the Al-Assad regime also seems more intent on denying aid and causing civilian harm than ever before. Resolution 2139 (2014) called on the Syrian parties to immediately cease the indiscriminate use of weapons in populated areas, including through aerial bombardment using barrel bombs. Yet in the year since the resolution was adopted, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the Assad regime has dropped at least 1,950 barrel bombs, which have killed at least 6,480 people, 95 per cent of whom were civilians. According to the Human Rights Watch report released earlier this week, satellite imagery identified at least 450 distinct major damage sites in 10 opposition-held towns and villages in the Dara'a governorate, and more than 1,000 major damage sites in the Aleppo governorate, between February 2014 and January of this year. The Human Rights Watch report shows that many impact sites have damage signatures consistent with the detonation of large, air-dropped munitions, including improvised barrel and conventional bombs dropped by helicopters. Yet in spite of this clear evidence, Assad cheerfully denied that his forces used barrel bombs and called any such claims, "a childish story" — a particularly grotesque choice of words, given that well over 10,000 children have been killed in the conflict so far.

The recently released report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/28/69) documents many attacks on civilians. One of them occurred on Aleppo's al-Shaar neighbourhood on 6 November. The first barrel bomb reportedly killed civilians in its area of impact and buried more in rubble. When others rushed to the area to dig out the people buried and assist the wounded, the Government dropped a second barrel bomb. At least 15 people were killed in all, most of them women and children. Some of the wounded later died in field hospitals, according to the report, due to the lack of necessary medical supplies.

The lack of medical supplies is no accident; it is the result of the Al-Assad regime's routine confiscation of medical and surgical supplies transported by United Nations convoys. The United Nations and its implementing partners have tried to be maximally transparent with the Syrian regime by allowing the Government to inspect cross-line shipments, going beyond the provisions in resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). Yet, even when these regime approvals for cross-line operations are granted, the regime seizes medical supplies, such as surgical items, midwifery kits and rehydration kits, which could save the lives of mothers, small children and babies. The Council was clear in its demand that all parties allow delivery of medical assistance and cease depriving civilians of food and medicine indispensable for their survival in resolution 2139 (2014).

The Physicians for Human Rights report that Assistant Secretary-General Kang mentioned documents 228 attacks on 179 separate medical facilities. Of these, Physicians for Human Rights found, 90 per cent were carried out by regime forces. To date, according to Physicians for Human Rights, 145 medical personnel have been executed or tortured to death in Syria; 139 of those individual killings were carried out by Syrian Government forces or by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

In Yarmouk, 18,000 civilians — most of them Palestinians refugees — are virtually cut off from assistance and surrounded by fighting. In 2014, the United Nations was only able to provide the equivalent of 400 calories per day for each inhabitant of Yarmouk — the equivalent of two cups of rice — due to the extremely limited access provided by the Syrian regime. If members have not seen the photos of the kids inside Yarmouk, they should force themselves to stare at their sunken, hollow faces and glossed eyes. This is what Al-Assad's regime has done to children, and he is under insufficient pressure from his backers to do something as simple as let food through. And Yarmouk is not an outlier: of the 212,000 Syrians living in besieged areas, 185,000 of them, or 87 per cent, live in areas being besieged by Syrian Government forces.

Now, terrorist groups like ISIL have committed horrific abuses against Syrians, and we must be absolutely adamant and united in our condemnation of those horrors, which are on the rise. We condemn in the strongest possible terms ISIL's attacks of 23 February on Assyrian Christian villages in the northeast Syrian province of Al Hasakah, where they kidnapped hundreds of civilians, including women, children and older persons, and we join others in demanding the immediate and unconditional release of these civilians, together with all of ISIL's hostages.

In December, four mass graves were discovered in Deir ez-Zor, containing the bodies of some of the hundreds of people abducted by ISIL months before. ISIL has also established what they call "cub camps", where they indoctrinate kids, teaching them how to use weapons and to carry out suicide attacks.

At the same time we condemn ISIL and unite to confront them, we must remember that the rise of these violent extremist groups in Syria would not have happened without the atrocities perpetrated by the Al-Assad regime. And the regime's ongoing atrocities continue to be the extremists' best recruiting tool. So any plan that would ally the international community with Al-Assad to confront these violent extremist groups would be completely counterproductive, as it would further fuel ISIL's rise.

There is only one way out of this horrific crisis, and that is through a comprehensive political solution. To that end, the United States again joins others in commending the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, to halt — even for a limited time — the use of all aerial bombs and heavy artillery in Aleppo, whose civilians have suffered immensely amid fierce fighting. While it would be a welcome step if the Al-Assad regime were to fulfil the commitments it made to Mr. De Mistura to stop unilaterally its aerial bombardment in Aleppo and allow the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilians for six weeks, the regime has an abysmal track record on honouring its commitments. Indeed, these very commitments are supposed to have been implemented under resolutions adopted by this very Council. So what matters and what we must look to are the regime's actions.

In addition to marking a year since the adoption of resolution 2139 (2014), we also mark other terrible benchmarks today. On 15 March, we will enter the fifth year of the Syrian conflict. It has also been three years since plainclothes security officers raided the office of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression, a Damascus-based group dedicated to promoting freedom of expression, detaining 14 staff members. Many of those detained were tortured, according to staff members who were later released. Among those detained was the group's director, Mazen Darwish, who was charged with so-called crimes such as publishing human rights reports and documenting the names of people tortured, disappeared or killed during the conflict.

Mazen is still behind bars today, despite a General Assembly resolution adopted in May 2014 (resolution 67/262) that included a demand for his immediate release. Writing from jail last year, Mazen said,

> "There is not a single prison in Syria today without one of my friends inside it, nor is there a cemetery in Syria today that doesn't contain the remains of one of them."

There is a risk, in our regular meetings on Syria, to get used to the fact that the numbers of individuals detained and killed and disappeared and displaced and denied food — among so many other measures of human suffering — continue to rise. Indeed, there is a perverse dynamic whereby, as those numbers continue to rise, our sensitivity falls. Our nerve endings harden, and a sense of inevitability takes hold.

We must not let that happen. We must remember that each of those rising numbers and each one of those millions stands for another person. We must return to the commitments the Council has made, such as those in past resolutions to "take further measures" "in the

case of non-compliance" (resolution 2165 (2014)) and to hold accountable those responsible for violations and abuses.

The Council's impact will increase only if member States' positions change, and that will happen only if we recognize that there are children just like our own, starving in Yarmouk, and mothers just like our own who die in childbirth in Aleppo, because medical supplies have been stolen off United Nations trucks, or mothers who feel helpless in the face of their children's pleas for food. If that does not motivate us, literally nothing will.

Mr. Olguín Cigarroa (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the briefings by the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres.

We did not want to say this, but in reading the report of the Secretary-General on the humanitarian situation in Syria (S/2015/124), we were struck by a sense of death, desolation and desperation. It is evidenced in the fact that, four years after the conflict's start, we have stopped counting those who die daily. Over 12 million people need humanitarian assistance. More than half of the Syrian population are displaced and 16 per cent of the population is outside of the country.

Chile strongly condemns the violence committed against the civilian population, regardless of where it originates, in particular the escalation of violence in Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Damascus and rural Damascus, among other areas. We deplore the use of any kind of weapon that does not distinguish between combatants and the civilian population, in particular the use of barrel bombs and the ongoing indiscriminate bombing and attacks with explosives, which have increased the number of dead, wounded and displaced by the conflict. The attacks and the capturing of individuals by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and their executions does nothing but exacerbate instability and insecurity for the Syrian population. All of those responsible should be held accountable before the law.

We believe it highly important that enhanced measures be taken to ensure that the parties cease to put up obstacles to aid delivery in areas that are out of their control and put an end their ongoing attacks on basic services and infrastructure. We stress the importance of an end being put to attacks on schools and other educational facilities. The displacement of children, in addition to denying them the right to education, increases the risk of them being marginalized in society, with the resulting well-known consequences. For that reason, we support the Secretary-General's observation in his report that there must be an urgent effort to rebuild the Syrian education system.

Chile urges the parties to unequivocally implement humanitarian resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) in order to prevent the delivery of humanitarian aid from being used as a weapon of war. We stress the pressing need to free the besieged areas, in which there are over 200,000 people, and ensure access for the population to medicine and medical supplies.

We take this opportunity to recognize the agencies, programmes and funds of the United Nations and their implementation partners for the tireless efforts that they undertake to deal with the tragic humanitarian crisis in Syria and the region in a climate that is very complex and marked by insecurity. Chile condemns the fact that less than a year after the unanimous adoption of resolution 2165 (2014), which ensures the protection and security of humanitarian workers, there are endless ongoing attacks against them.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that the humanitarian crisis can only be overcome if we can reach an inclusive political solution to the crisis, and therefore we should continue to encourage the search for such a solution. We value the initiatives taken at the meetings held in Cairo and Moscow, mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report, which constitute a first step. We hope that they can be complemented by the holding of other dialogue exercises on the basis of the Geneva communiqué. We reiterate our support to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, in carrying out that task.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): We wish to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for their briefings.

Malaysia remains deeply concerned about the dire, ongoing and deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria. The parties to the conflict keep upping the ante in a desperate attempt to defeat the other, seemingly oblivious to the gruesome toll of death, mayhem and destruction that they are inflicting on the Syrian people in the very country that they claim to be fighting for.

We commend the United Nations humanitarian agencies and their partners for their commitment and dedication to delivering humanitarian assistance to

the Syrian people despite facing numerous challenges. While we commend the cooperation by the parties to the conflict in facilitating and allowing humanitarian access to reach those in need, we are concerned that administrative and bureaucratic hurdles, such as delays in responding to requests for humanitarian access and restrictions on the prohibitions of surgical and other medical supplies, remain in place. Those obstacles are definitely not helpful to the international community's efforts to alleviate the already worsening humanitarian situation and ease the suffering of the Syrian people on the ground. We call on the Syrian Government to further facilitate the movement of humanitarian supplies, especially to hard-to-reach areas. All parties to the conflict must commit to implementing resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014). They must not be allowed to thwart the objectives of those resolutions.

We commend the State of Kuwait for hosting the third international humanitarian pledging conference, which will be held on 31 March 2015. Malaysia looks forward to its participation at the third conference to demonstrate our solidarity with the Syrian people. We are hopeful that the conference will help meet some of the funding gaps of the 2015 Syria response plan.

We thank the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic for the recent release of its ninth report (A/HRC/28/69). We are deeply appalled at the continued violations of international humanitarian and human rights law and atrocities perpetrated by all sides to the conflict in Syria. In this regard, we appreciate the victim-oriented approach that has been adopted in the investigating reports on allegations of human rights abuses and violations in Syria. However, we regret that the Commission until today has not been able to enter the country to enable it to fulfil its mandate more effectively.

The inhumane atrocities and reign of terror of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the areas under its control has worsened the already grave human rights and humanitarian situation in Syria. Malaysia strongly condemns the recent abduction and killing of more than a hundred Assyrians by ISIL on 23 February 2015 in north-eastern Syria. Such atrocities once again demonstrate the brutality, intolerance and extremist ideology of ISIL against people of all faiths, ethnicities and nationalities. Malaysia strongly holds the view that the perpetrators of all grave violations and atrocities who have until now enjoyed impunity cannot go unpunished; they must be brought to justice to be held accountable.

Malaysia supports the efforts made by Mr. Staffan de Mistura, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, to seek a comprehensive political solution for the Syrian crisis based on the Geneva communiqué. We applaud Mr. De Mistura's continued efforts with the relevant parties regarding the proposed freeze arrangements. We are extremely hopeful that the parties to the conflict will ensure the operationalization of the Aleppo "freeze" proposal. The conflicting parties should view it as a confidence-building measure to facilitate humanitarian operations and as an opportunity to restart dialogue and a political process.

Malaysia reiterates its view that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict. Malaysia firmly believes that the future of Syria should be determined by the Syrian people themselves through a Syrian-led political process. The international community should continue to support, promote, encourage and facilitate an inclusive political transition process and maintain efforts to foster national reconciliation in Syria. In this regard, Malaysia welcomes and supports all diplomatic initiatives, such as the Moscow and Cairo initiatives, to try to restart political dialogue between the conflicting parties. We further call on parties with influence to continue their efforts to encourage the conflicting parties to seek a political and peaceful resolution.

Nevertheless, we firmly believe that there must be a willingness on the part of the parties to the conflict themselves to find a political solution to it. The international community can only do so much. The international community's efforts will be meaningless and in vain without the conscious efforts and sincerity of the parties to end the conflict and seek a peaceful and political solution.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to thank the President for this meeting on the Syrian Arab Republic on the implementation of resolution 2139 (2014) on humanitarian assistance. We also wish to thank the High Commissioner of the United Nations for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Kyung-wha Kang.

In addressing the dramatic humanitarian situation in Syria, we have to speak with clarity before the international community. We cannot address this problem without failing to refer to the causes that led to the armed conflict and the devastating effect that the conflict has on the country, in particular on the

civilian population, which has been victim of violence. In violation of international law, foreign powers have backed — financially and otherwise — armed groups and terrorists in order to promote through violence the toppling of the legitimate regime in Syria, ignoring the country's right to self-determination. Such illegal actions have also endangered the unity, territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Syria.

Venezuela rejects war, human rights violations and atrocities that arise as a result of religious, political and ethnic intolerance. We are indignant about and lament the fact that other countries are intervening, which has led to political and military instability in the region and brought so much suffering to the people, triggering barbarities that threaten human beings. The financing of the war has led to an escalation in the crisis aimed at toppling the Government of President Bashar Al-Assad. Weapons and military capacity have been given to terrorist groups that today are expanding their barbaric acts and have destroyed the country.

The existence of terrorist groups is not just a problem in Syria. The expansion of their actions currently affects neighbouring countries and threatens to broaden the their presence and control over other territories. That is why the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to reiterate that the only way to stop the humanitarian crisis hinges on a political solution to the conflict that is negotiated and inclusive. Accordingly, there should be an immediate ceasefire that helps to bring about a firm and lasting peace that ensures reconciliation in this sister Arab country.

We reiterate our commitment to the respect for the unity, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria in step with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We back the initiatives that are aimed at seeking peace in Syria. We therefore welcome the diplomatic efforts that have been deployed in Moscow and Cairo aimed at assisting the parties and finding a political solution to the conflict. We encourage ongoing diplomatic efforts through the holding of upcoming events. Further, our country wishes to express its most firm support for the actions undertaken by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, who in his latest report showed optimism regarding peace and at the same time expressed that within the equation of this armed conflict the Al-Assad Government is part of the solution.

In that regard, our country supports the implementation of the mechanism on a freeze — the ceasefire in Aleppo — so as to contribute to alleviating the tragic humanitarian situation being experienced by the civilian population victimized by the armed conflict. We must build confidence among the parties and give peace a chance.

We have noted with concern the latest information on the humanitarian situation in Syria. The Secretary-General's twelfth report (S/2015/124) paints a critical picture of the situation in Aleppo, Raqqa, Homs, Damascus and Al-Hasakeh, among other places. We are concerned about the humanitarian impact produced by the crisis in Syria, which is spilling over into neighbouring States.

Given the challenges that have arisen from this protracted conflict, we appreciate and wish to commend the work of the humanitarian agencies. We reject the idea of those agencies being the victims of violence and military targets. However, we view with concern the fact that the extraordinary force that the humanitarian agencies represent is being blocked by the actions of terrorist organizations operating in Syria, which, as stated in the report, are stealing humanitarian assistance from multilateral agencies such as the World Food Programme for reasons of propaganda. There is a need for strict adherence to the guiding principles of the United Nations regarding the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people. All humanitarian assistance must be coordinated with the Syrian Government, and it is imperative that such assistance not reach terrorist groups.

We view with concern the displacement of millions of civilians as a result of the war. Venezuela therefore appreciates the solidarity of the neighbouring countries that are providing assistance in their own territories to Syrian refugees. The complex humanitarian situation affecting the Syrian civilian population requires a sustained effort from the international community in terms of ensuring the financial resources necessary to mitigate the shortfalls in food, medicine and other basic services that have arisen because of the armed conflict. Funds are not currently sufficient to address the crisis, and we therefore call on the donor community to fulfil its pledges to contribute to such efforts.

We condemn the deliberate attacks carried out against civilians and humanitarian personnel, as well as the terrorist acts in Syria, regardless of the perpetrators. We call on the parties to fully observe

the norms and principles of international humanitarian law on the protection of civilians in time of conflict, pursuant to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. We also condemn the recruitment of children and the separation of families by armed groups in Syria. We demand that these actors put an end to such practices, which represent flagrant violations of international law, in particular of the relevant legal instruments.

Lastly, we reiterate that overcoming the humanitarian problems that have arisen because of the war and that are causing suffering to the civilian population in Syria will necessarily involve an inclusive dialogue, without any conditions, and a negotiated political solution to the conflict. The parties' commitment to achieving peace and stability in the country without foreign interference is essential. The international community must support all diplomatic efforts to that end.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Ms. Kang and Mr. Guterres for their comprehensive briefings. We listened carefully to the information provided by our Security Council colleagues. We are grateful to the humanitarian workers and agencies who are working under fire in Syria, risking their lives in an attempt to alleviate suffering. We understand the heavy burden that neighbouring States are bearing with the overflow of Syrian refugees into their countries.

It is clear to all that the difficulties encountered at present by Syrian civilians in terms of access to urgent humanitarian assistance are due to the complex security situation, especially the activity of terrorist groups. We are especially alarmed by the situation of people in the governorates of Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor, which are controlled by the so-called Islamic State. We would say that in those areas 600,000 people in need are deprived of access to humanitarian assistance. The situation has worsened with the closing of humanitarian offices in Raqqa, which were providing medicines and medical supplies.

We were extremely disturbed to hear that Islamic State is stealing humanitarian assistance from United Nations agencies and then distributing it under its banner. We understand that we must try all possible legal means to deliver humanitarian assistance to civilians who are under the control of terrorists, while ensuring appropriate safeguards to prevent any more such blatant incidents.

Turning to the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the humanitarian situation in Syria (S/2-15/124), we would like to call for an appropriate assessment of the terrorists and their actions. It is unacceptable refer to entities that are on Security Council sanctions lists, including the Al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State, as "the opposition". It is categorically unacceptable and politically incorrect. It cannot happen again.

We continue to be shocked by the blatant and reprehensible actions of terrorists. Yesterday the Security Council unanimously and strongly condemned the Islamic State's kidnapping of more than 100 Christians in north-eastern Syria. The terrorists are blocking humanitarian deliveries into Yarmouk refugee camp. Also unacceptable are the crimes being committed by other groups fighting against the Government, which are intentionally firing on residential areas of Syrian towns using mortars and highly destructive weapons. In the past month, such bombings have killed 1,440 people, including children, and wounded more than 200.

We call on both parties to the Syrian conflict — the Syrian Government and the opposition — to comply with Security Council resolutions and to observe international humanitarian law. We share the concern of the Security Council regarding the state of the educational system in Syria. It would be desirable for United Nations agencies, which are doing a great deal to alleviate the humanitarian situation, to become actively involved in the process of rebuilding schools and post-secondary institutions for teacher training. This is very important for the cities to which refugees and internally displaced persons are returning, including Homs and Ayn al-Arab.

We call on United Nations agencies to support constructive cooperation with the Syrian authorities. We are convinced that this is one of the major preconditions for constructive humanitarian engagement and assistance. We also encourage the Syrian Government to be in close contact with United Nations humanitarian agencies.

In conclusion, we agree with the view of the Secretary-General that the solution to the Syrian conflict can be neither military nor humanitarian but must be political. That is what the Russian Federation has been working towards since the beginning of the crisis, together with the Syrians, in the framework of an inter-Syrian dialogue based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). This is our goal in the context of the extremely complex efforts under way

with the parties and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura. We expect the Syrian Government and the Syrian opposition to go the extra mile to ensure the success of the efforts of the Special Envoy and thereby take the first steps towards the restoration of peace in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Laro (Nigeria): I wish to thank our briefers for their presentations and commend them for their effective leadership in the ongoing multidimensional effort to address the humanitarian situation in Syria.

According to the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/124), various factors have exacerbated the humanitarian situation in Syria. The ongoing conflict, administrative hurdles, inadequate funding and the impact of the winter season have in various ways made it more difficult to render assistance to people in desperate need.

Despite these challenges, the United Nations and its partners have succeeded in delivering food, non-food items, water and medical supplies to fairly large numbers of people using shipments from Turkey and Jordan. We would like to express our appreciation to the Governments of Turkey and Jordan for their sustained support to the United Nations monitoring mechanism.

Nigeria acknowledges the support of the Syrian authorities, at the national and local levels, to the humanitarian effort. However, we would like to appeal for more expeditious approval of aid shipments in order to help the United Nations and its partners consolidate the successes they have achieved so far in dealing with the humanitarian situation in Syria. Nigeria strongly urges all parties to refrain from blocking supplies to areas outside their control. They should also cease restricting humanitarian access within the areas they do control, since such restriction is clearly an infringement of humanitarian law. All sides must respect humanitarian principles and ensure the well-being of civilians, especially women and children, in areas under their control.

Nigeria acknowledges with profound appreciation the tremendous sacrifices that have been made by Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and the other countries hosting Syrian refugees. We pay tribute to the humanitarian workers operating in challenging circumstances on the ground in Syria. We urge donors to scale up their support for the Syrian humanitarian effort. As various speakers have emphasized this afternoon, the only sustainable solution to the humanitarian crisis in Syria lies in a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Unless and until that is achieved, the difficult humanitarian situation in the country will very likely persist. We therefore encourage all parties to cooperate with Special Envoy de Mistura and embrace a dialogue, with a view to reaching a negotiated solution to the conflict.

Ms. Jakubonė (Lithuania): I would like to thank Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres for their comprehensive briefings.

We are facing the world's largest humanitarian crisis, one that is having a grave impact on international peace and security. Trapped civilians, refugees and internally displaced people are desperately waiting for the end of the senseless bloodshed in Syria. The numbers speak for themselves. Since the conflict began, 200,000 people have been killed; 12.2 million, half of them children, are in immediate humanitarian need and 3.8 million are refugees. Thousands of civilians have fled their homes, seeking refuge wherever they can, some of them risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean, some finding themselves locked into the war zone in no-man's land. The host countries, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, have been generous to the Syrian refugees. To cope with that extraordinary challenge, they need more aid and development assistance.

Resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) have outlined key obligations under international humanitarian law that should be unconditionally respected by all parties at all times. Nothing has been done so far. On the contrary, indiscriminate aerial bombings, including Al-Assad's barrel bombs, shelling by the armed opposition and killings by terrorists and extremists continue every day. We are witnessing the deliberate refusal of the Al-Assad regime to carry out its primary responsibility for protecting its civilian population.

No one is immune in today's Syria. Hundreds of medical personnel and humanitarian workers are being killed. Schools are attacked, ransacked and destroyed. Journalists and activists documenting violations and abuses of human rights disappear and are detained, tortured and killed. War crimes and crimes against humanity have been committed by the Al-Assad regime as well as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other terrorist and extremist groups, for which enormous amounts of evidence have been documented by the

Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria. We condemn unreservedly the widespread and systematic violations of international human-rights and humanitarian law and the gruesome abuses and violations of human rights that have been perpetrated by all parties to the Syrian conflict.

We greatly value the work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and of other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. Violence and insecurity, shifting conflict lines, deliberate interference with and closing of operations, obstructive administrative procedures and financial shortfalls continue to constrain humanitarian access and timely and efficient humanitarian aid across Syria. The 2015 humanitarian appeal for Syria has increased twelve-fold since the beginning of the crisis. Yet only little bits of humanitarian assistance reach those in need, in amounts that are far from enough to help those suffering in a sustained way. But we must continue. It is our human and moral obligation to help those in desperate need. In that regard, we sincerely welcome the upcoming third pledging conference for Syria to be held in Kuwait.

There is neither a military nor a humanitarian solution to this crisis. A political settlement must be found. The Council should do way more to push for a genuine and sustainable political solution, based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and inclusively addressing the aspirations and grievances of all Syrians. We support the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, in his efforts to reduce violence, as a stepping stone towards an ultimately genuinely Syrian-led political process. All parties to the conflict must fully comply with the relevant resolutions without further delay. We fully support the Secretary-General's call for the siege of 212,000 people to be immediately lifted, access for medical and surgical supplies to all parts of the country ensured, the practice of using denial of key services as a weapon of war ended, Syria's education system rebuilt and the use of barrel bombs prohibited.

Lastly, the Council must live up to its stated intention to take further measures in the event of continued non-compliance. There can be no impunity for crimes committed, and their perpetrators must be brought to justice. The role of the International Criminal Court should not be forgotten, although the Council's inaction in May created a licence for all perpetrators to kill, torture and rape again. Justice and accountability are prerequisites for a lasting peace in Syria for all Syrians.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I would like to thank High Commissioner Guterres and Assistant Secretary-General Kang for their briefings and for the remarkable work that both the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are doing to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. I welcome the fact that we are holding today's meeting in an open format. It is vital that our horror at the scale of the humanitarian crisis in Syria and its neighbours, and our condemnation of Al-Assad and his brutal regime, be heard loudly and clearly outside this Chamber.

Next month will see the start of the fifth year of the conflict in Syria. More than 220,000 people are dead and 12.2 million reliant on humanitarian assistance. Almost half of the Syrian population is displaced; 7.6 million people have fled their homes within Syria and 3.8 million have taken refuge in neighbouring countries, causing massive security, economic and social challenges for all of Syria's neighbours, particularly Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. Those statistics have been heard many times in the Council, but we have failed to take the action necessary to put an end to this terrible conflict. Al-Assad's regime bears direct responsibility for the situation.

Some Member States claim that terrorism lies at the heart of the conflict, but the Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria was quite clear on that point last week when he said that terrorism was not the cause of the conflict but a consequence of it. Al-Assad's regime continues to target civilians and use barrel bombs and chemical weapons indiscriminately. He continues to abuse those held in detention, recruit child soldiers, deny civilians access to essential medical supplies and collectively punish them through the denial of essential services such as water and electricity. That has created an environment that has spawned terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Al-Assad's actions, and others reported by the Commission of Inquiry, represent clear violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, and amount to crimes against humanity.

As Assistant Secretary-General Kang has reminded us, we must end the shameful culture of impunity in Syria, and hold the perpetrators of those crimes to account. Nor should we ignore the heinous acts

perpetrated by ISIL and other extremist groups, which include sexual violence, kidnappings and torture. It is manifestly obvious that the situation in Syria should be referred to the International Criminal Court.

A negotiated political transition based on the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) is the only sustainable way to end the horror. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria to establish a freeze in aerial and heavy artillery attacks in Aleppo, which may be a first step to a broader political process. We encourage Mr. De Mistura to work with both the regime and the moderate opposition in the development of that proposal. Experience shows, however, that we should not take the regime's promises at face value. In particular, we must do all we can to avoid a tragedy such as that which took place in Homs.

The Syrian regime must allow greater humanitarian access to besieged areas. More than 200,000 people now live their lives under siege, and 80 per cent of those people are besieged by regime forces. Another 4.8 million people remain in dangerous and hard-to-reach areas. Last year, the United Nations submitted twice as many requests for cross-line aid convoys than in 2013, and yet reached less than half as many people. A year after the adoption of resolution 2139 (2014), that is wholly unacceptable. We must preserve the few gains we have made with regard to cross-border access and be resolute in applying pressure on the Al-Assad regime to grant access to other areas. I call on all Council and non-Council members to join our efforts in that regard.

We have been able to make a difference where we do have access. It has been over a year since the last reported polio case, and international assistance has averted starvation and mass malnutrition. However, funding is not keeping up with the needs on the ground. The needs of the Syrian people are growing at more than six times the rate of funding. The 2015 United Nations appeals for Syria and the region now stand at $8.4 billion, 40 per cent higher than last year. Kuwait has shown great leadership in agreeing to host a third international pledging conference for the Syrian crisis next month. We must match its leadership by pledging the support needed to meet the growing crisis. Hundreds of thousands of lives are at stake.

The United Kingdom is determined to play its role. During her recent visit to Jordan, the Secretary of State for International Development announced a further $154 million of funding, bringing the United Kingdom's assistance for Syria's humanitarian relief to $1.2 billion. That includes $145 million to provide education, protection and trauma care for children affected by the crisis, and to help prevent a lost generation of Syrians. I call on all Members of the United Nations to do their part and pledge further funding at the Kuwait conference.

Let me conclude by again thanking the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Guterres, and Assistant-Secretary General Kang for their briefings. Their input and the input from experts on the ground are very useful for Council members. We should be open to other such briefings, including from the International Committee of the Red Cross and Syrian activists, in future months.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): I would like to start by thanking Ms. Kyung-wha Kang and Mr. António Guterres for their very comprehensive briefings about the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, and also for their tireless efforts to ease the suffering of the many civilians affected by this civil war. Angola highly commends the quality of their work and the efforts they are undertaking to bring the facts to the Security Council. They have done their job, and it is now up to the Council to deliberate, with the same amount of courage and objectivity, on the facts that have been presented to it.

As we were briefed, it is most unfortunate that the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Syria continues to deteriorate. This is a catastrophic humanitarian situation. The persistence of heavy fighting and the complete disregard for international humanitarian law have put a very burden on the civilian population, which continues to leave and experience tragic circumstances, including death, sickness, famine and displacment, while the international community remains unable to find ways to successfully mediate a peaceful solution to the conflict. Furthermore, due to political differences, the international community is unable to make a more meaningful contribution to put an end to the suffering of the women, children and peace-loving Syrians.

The staggering numbers of internationally displaced Syrians and refugees in neighbouring countries attest to the dimension of the humanitarian catastrophe that has struck the Syrian people. In fact, the civilian population is the main victim of this savage war. Rape and sexual violence, enforced disappearance, forced displacement, the recruitment of child soldiers and

summary executions happen on a daily basis. Human rights abuses are being perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and other terrorist groups, whose rapid advance across large areas of the Syrian territory adds an additional element of concern. Such concern is not only due to its severe impact on the civilian population of Syria, but also due to their rapid spread into most of the Middle East, North Africa and beyond. Those terrorists must be stopped and, ultimately, defeated.

It is most unfortunate that the parties to the Syrian conflict continue to pursue a military solution while showing no commitment to a peaceful settlement with a view to arriving at the inclusive politial solution that we have been advocating for some time. It is of the utmost importance that the international community continue to exert pressure by urging all the parties concerned to be fully aware of the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis and to ensure that relief agencies are allowed to provide the necessary assistance to the civilians in need.

With approximately 12 million people lacking basic humanitarian assistance, the protection of civilians is an absolute priority. Treating and evacuating the wounded and providing food, water, sanitation and hygiene, health care and shelter are some of the most basic and urgent tasks that humanitarian agencies must be allowed to perform without interference or obstruction. It is indeed hard to imagine that more than 3 million Syrian citizens were forced to become refugees in neighbouring countries. Those countries, in particular Lebanon, are approaching a dangerous saturation point, with more than 1 million refugees in need of shelter and other basic needs. The situation is just as dire in Iraq, Jordan and Turkey, with the Governments increasingly unable to provide basic needs, including health care, to such large numbers of refugees. Angola pledges its solidarity with Syria's neighbouring countries. We look forward to the success of the third international pledging conference, to be hosted by Kuwait.

In conclusion, may I reiterate Angola's strong commitment to contributing to finding a political solution to this conflict, which must be based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). We commend the work being undertaken by Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and encourage his efforts to build bridges between the opposing sides. We also encourage the diplomatic initiatives that have been undertaken, including the Moscow and Cairo initiatives, aimed at restarting the political dialogue among the parties to the conflict.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of China.

I thank Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for their briefings.

The Syrian conflict will soon enter its fifth year. This protracted conflict has devastated the ancient and beautiful nation of Syria, traumatized its people, spread terrorism and placed enormous economic and social pressures on Syria's neighbours. In this grave situation, the parties in Syria, the international community, the United Nations and humanitarian agencies must take terrible risks and overcome great difficulties in delivering humanitarian assistance in Syria and its neighbours, and have contributed significantly to alleviating the humanitarian crisis. China highly appreciates their work.

In the meantime, humanitarian efforts in Syria are still confronted by a variety of challenges, including ongoing conflict, rampant terrorism, blocked channels of communication and grave shortfalls in funding. If the relevant resolutions of the Security Council are to be fully implemented and the humanitarian situation in Syria is to be tangibly improved, the parties should, out of their own sense of humanity, assume their respective responsibilities, strengthen their coordination and focus on the following aspects in the next phase.

First, we must vigorously promote the political process to resolve the Syrian issue. That is the only way to restore peace and stability in Syria and improve the humanitarian situation. China appreciates and supports the mediation efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to promote the freeze initiative. We also support the efforts of Russia and Egypt to promote the political process. The international community, and the Security Council in particular, should support the political mediation efforts of the relevant parties and urge the Syrian Government and the opposition to find a solution as soon as possible that is appropriate to national conditions and accommodates the interests of all parties.

Secondly, the parties in Syria, the international community, the United Nations and other humanitarian

agencies should fully and comprehensively implement resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). The Syrian Government should bear the primary responsibility for protecting civilians. The Syrian opposition should, alongside the Syrian Government, take measures to protect civilians and support efforts to deliver international humanitarian assistance. Organizations such as the United Nations should follow the United Nations guiding principles for humanitarian assistance and strengthen communications with the Syrian Government to win cooperation and support. The international community should provide constructive assistance on the basis of respect for Syria's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and avoid politicizing humanitarian questions and militarizing humanitarian assistance.

Thirdly, close attention should be paid to the exacerbation by terrorists of the humanitarian situation. Terrorist organizations inside Syria kill civilians brutally, thereby exacerbating the humanitarian crisis and undermining humanitarian efforts. This has become the principal cause of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria. China is firmly opposed to all forms of terrorism and condemns all violence against innocent civilians. The international community should fully implement resolutions 2170 2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015), on curbing and combatting terrorism. In that regard, counter-terrorism and humanitarian assistance needs should be well balanced and we must develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure that our goals are aligned and mutually reinforcing, and that no civilians are harmed.

Fourthly, the international community should strengthen its support for United Nations humanitarian assistance efforts. China appreciates the fact that Kuwait and the United Nations will jointly host a pledging conference. We call on the international community to actively contribute to the United Nations Syria strategic response plan for 2015 and to regional refugee and reconstruction programmes so as to alleviate funding shortfalls and ease the pressure on Syria's neighbours caused by the refugee problem.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to pay tribute to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and to the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. I thank them for their briefings on the humanitarian situation in my country, Syria. I would also like to thank the presidency for issuing a press statement (SC/11799) this morning condemning the fact that terrorists of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have kidnapped more than 100 Christian Assyrians from their villages in Al-Hasakeh governorate. I would also like to thank all the speakers who sympathized with the humanitarian suffering being experienced by large segments of the Syrian population as a consequence of the persistence of the crisis. I would like to start with a few preliminary comments.

A year ago the Security Council adopted resolution 2139 (2014), which condemns the destruction of the cultural heritage in Iraq and Syria by ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front. Since some Member States are not serious about fighting ISIS and theAl-Nusra Front by way of this resolution, ISIS terrorists demolished the Mosul Museum today, and sold 100 pieces of cultural heritage in London in an auction sale a few days ago.

Despite all that, we are still hearing some speakers ignoring the errors in the policies of their Governments towards my countries. They insist on blackmailing the Syrian population and the international community's opinion by repeatedly saying, as we heard only minutes ago, that as long as President Al-Assad stays in office, ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front will remain strong. Such a serious assertion reveals the identity of those who are supporting ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Libya and Lebanon. It also shows why a terrorist, such as ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front are still in the region, and it illustrates the facat that they are not truly fighting those two terrorist organizations.

I also heard a colleague say that our air force is targeting terrorists with what she called barrel bombs. Regardless of the fact that there is nothing called a barrel bomb in military terminology, it is worth noting that the air force of that colleague has been targeting terrorists with cruise missiles, smart bombs and other highly destructive weapons. Why is her country allowed to target terrorists in other countries' territories while our air force is not allowed to target the same terrorists on our own territory? And why is it that a terrorist we are targeting on our land becomes an innocent civilian on whom we are dropping barrel bombs?

A year has now passed since the adoption of resolution 2139 (2014) and it has been more than

seven months since the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014) seeking to deal with the humanitarian situation in Syria. Nonetheless, the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate in some regions, begging the question, "Why?" To answer this question, we need a serious assessment of how we have been dealing with this important humanitarian dossier. We also need to define the standards that should govern our working mechanisms in order to duly contribute to alleviating the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian population. To this end, we have to start diagnosing the root causes of the problem. Secondly, we have to determine the goals we seek to achieve. Thirdly, we must adopt the legal grounds on the basis of which we will be working. Fourthly, and finally, we must set out the mechanisms governing our work. I would like to detail each of these points separately.

First of all, let me address how to diagnose the root causes. It is high time for some parties, after a long period of denial, to recognize that the root cause of the humanitarian crisis in several areas of Syria is the result of the expansion of terrorism supported by foreign forces. If we follow the humanitarian crisis objectively, it can be seen that the crisis, including the refugee and displaced person crises, has arisen only in the areas controlled armed terrorist groups. The best example is what happened in the city of Aleppo, which maintained its stability and prosperity for more than a year and a half after the onset of the crisis, without any problems, until some countries decided to ask their terrorist groups, which are multinational and trans-border in nature, to enter that city and take civilians as human shields.

We have to agree that any measure will fall short of alleviating the human suffering of the Syrians in need as long as the relevant Security Council resolutions are not implemented, especially resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2014), in collaboration and coordination with the Syrian Government. In other words, we have to put an end to the practices of the Turkish-Qatari-Israeli-Saudi terrorist alliance that is supporting, funding and arming ISIS, the Al-Nusra front, the Free Syrian Army and the other terrorist groups that are embracing the ideology and practices of Al-Qaida.

This was reaffirmed recently by the American General Wesley Clark, the former Supreme Commander of NATO, when he said that ISIS was the product of the funding of close friends and allies of the United States. We cannot speak about improving the humanitarian situation while weapons and training are still being provided to terrorists under the slogan of "moderate Opposition". The former American Ambassador to Syria recently recognized that this so-called moderate Opposition is collaborating with the Al-Nusra Front and defending it.

Secondly, we must determine the goal we are seeking to achieve. Here we need to answer the following questions: Is the goal to improve the humanitarian situation in Syria or is it for some to exploit the suffering of the Syrian people as a means of pressuring the Syrian Government? If we agree that the objective is indeed to improve the humanitarian situation, we should do the following. First, we should deal with the terrorist phenomenon as I explained previously. Secondly, we need the immediate lifting of the unilateral compulsory measures that have been imposed against the Syrian people by some countries, including members of the Security Council, that claim to defend the Syrian people. I would like to note that the European Union, for instance, has imposed sanctions prohibiting the provision of fuel to civilian aircraft, as well as sanctions against the Ministers for Relief, Electricity and National Reconciliation. Thirdly, we must refrain from politicizing humanitarian issues in Syria, including in the reports submitted by the Secretariat.

We have conveyed to the Council the comments of the Syrian Government on the report currently under discussion, but I would like to give just two examples of such politicization. The first example has to do with the allegations that the Syrian Government is besieging some regions and preventing access of humanitarian assistance to those regions. I would like to ask how it can be said that those areas are besieged while munitions are still finding their way to those regions from terrorist-supporting countries? Those weapons are then being used to launch indiscriminate missile attacks and undertake suicide bombings in Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Dara'a and elsewhere, which had, as of 22 February, claimed the lives of 17,186 Syrian civilians, including 1,867 children.

Some report authors have come up with a new denomination to describe the terrorist groups. They have been calling them the "armed Syrian Opposition", ut we all know that the opposition in any given country cannot be anything other than a peaceful political opposition. As for the groups carrying weapons outside of State authority, recruiting thousands of foreign terrorist fighters and destroying, killing and wreaking

havoc, these can only be called terrorist groups, according to the Security Council's own definition in this regard.

I would like to mention that there are far more than 212,000 people being besieged in Syria. The correct figure is 23 million Syrians. Some 23 million Syrians are being besieged by countries supporting terrorism and imposing sanctions against the Syrian people.

The second example concerns allegations that barrel bombs are being used and that seek to portray the Syrian Government as evil. The Syrian army is fighting terrorism and protecting civilians in line with international law while taking great care to spare the lives of civilians living in the regions under terrorist threat. Our army is totally committed to the safety of those civilians, which has prevented us in many instances from uprooting those terrorists.

Thirdly, we need to define the legal grounds on which humanitarian assistance is to be provided. Here we need to agree that it is necessary to work according to United Nations guidelines for the provision of humanitarian assistance in emergencies, as per General Assembly resolution 182/46, especially with respect to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

Fourthly, let me turn to the mechanisms governing our methods of work. Given the shortfalls in the provision of humanitarian assistance, we need to undertake the following actions in order to avoid such shortfalls in future. We need first to reinforce the coordination and collaboration with the Syrian Government in order to guarantee access for humanitarian assistance for those who truly need it, by which I mean the civilians in the various Syrian regions without discrimination. We must make sure that humanitarian assistance does not fall into the hands of terrorist groups. We know that early this month ISIS seized assistance sent by the World Food Programme through Turkey.

Furthermore, we have to make sure that the humanitarian assistance is provided from within Syrian territory. While assistance was provided within Syrian territory to some 3.4 million beneficiaries in January 2015 alone thanks to the efforts and collaboration of the Syrian Government and thousands of volunteers from the Red Crescent, we have witnessed the limited number of beneficiaries of assistance channelled across the borders, only 5 per cent of whom were reached. This proves that the measures adopted by the United Nations and implementing resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) were not effective. Moreover, some have insisted on dispatching humanitarian assistance across the borders to implement a hidden agenda and achieve their goals through so-called humanitarian corridors, well aware that Turkey and Saudi Arabia are exploiting those resolutions by sending weapons and terrorists from Turkey or Jordan through the same corridors used by the United Nations.

Thirdly, there is a serious funding shortfall. At a time when the Syrian Government is responsible for delivering the majority of the humanitarian assistance being distributed in Syria, the humanitarian plan was funded at only 48 per cent in 2014, whereas the funding for terrorist attacks in Syria was at 100 per cent or more, thanks to the generous contributions of Qatar, Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

I take the opportunity offered by Mr. Guterres' presence here today to discuss the issue of Syrian refugees. I have already said that the crimes committed by the armed terrorist groups have forced Syrians to leave their homes in some regions and to become internally displaced persons or refugees in camps in neighbouring countries, where they are used to leverage political pressure and justify intervention and as pretexts for requests for financial assistance. Adding insult to injury, some of these camps are being used to train terrorists and recruit children who will later be sent to Syria, as confirmed in several international reports. If the Security Council truly wishes to help Syrian refugees, it must first help them return to Syria, in cooperation with the Syrian Government, which has repeatedly reiterated its readiness to provide for all their basic needs, including shelter, until they can return to the homes they fled.

In conclusion, I reiterate that the Syrian crisis can be resolved only through a peaceful, political settlement based on the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The settlement should also be based on intra-Syrian dialogue, under exclusively Syrian leadership and free from all forms of foreign interference in our internal affairs. We thank all those who are helping to alleviate the humanitarian suffering of our people with integrity and without hidden political agendas or manipulation of the grave situation.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon): Four years into the conflict in Syria, the international community remains unable

to stop the collapse into bloodshed and chaos of a country with one of the most ancient societies and rich civilizations on our planet. That tragic cycle of violence has left more than 200,000 people dead, many more wounded, 6.5 million — if not more — internally displaced persons and over 3 million refugees in neighbouring countries, not to mention the magnitude of physical destruction.

For four years, the Council, which is the organ entrusted by the Charter of the United Nations with maintaining international peace and security, has failed to facilitate the realization of a political solution that would put an end to the protracted conflict. By failing to assume its role, the Security Council has not only failed in its mission and indeed failed Syria, but it has also failed its neighbours and allowed for a dangerous increase in regional instability, a situation well illustrated by the fact that the conflict has produced a massive humanitarian crisis and one of biggest waves of human displacement since the Second World War. That has pushed the societies, economies and infrastructure of neighbouring counties to the brink, not to mention the negative impact it has had on the security environment throughout the region and beyond. As members know, terrorism, fanaticism and sectarianism are on the rise, threatening the stability of neighbouring countries and international peace and security.

Lebanon today is home to more than 1.1 million registered Syrian refugees and 350,000 Palestinian refugees, including 45,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria. That is about a third of my country's total population. Lebanon is the smallest country of the region in terms of both geographic size and population, but it hosts the largest number of refugees. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Lebanon is the country hosting the highest number of refugees per capita. It ranks second in the total number of refugees, behind only Pakistan, whose geographical size and population are respectively approximately 80 and 50 times that of my country.

The economic impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon has been detrimental. The World Bank estimated the total losses to Lebanon's economy as a result of the crisis at about $7.5 billion, and that was in the summer of 2013. The total economic loss today is almost double that amount. Eighty-six per cent of Syrian refugees live in local communities, in regions that are home to 68 per cent of the poorest Lebanese. Poverty in the country has risen by 61 per cent, Lebanese unemployment levels have doubled, economic growth stumbled, and the national infrastructure for education, health, energy and water is stretched beyond its capacity. In response to the growing challenge of the refugee crisis, my Government, in coordination with the relevant United Nations agencies and other partners, adopted in December 2014 the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-2016, with an estimated cost of $2.1 billion.

Allow me to reiterate today what we have stressed on several previous occasions. Lebanon cannot cope by itself with the humanitarian rights and needs of Syrian refugees on its soil and continues therefore to call for real burden-sharing and greater assistance to host communities through official delivery channels.

Under the able leadership of Mr. Guterres, Ms. Amos and Ms. Kang, the United Nations agencies have done an excellent job of seeking to alleviate the suffering of the refugees. Once again, I would like to commend their work and that of all the members of their respective teams. The international community has also shown tremendous generosity in response to the humanitarian crisis. In particular, Kuwait ought to be commended for continuing to host the donors conferences. However, more — and in reality, much more — still needs to be done. In fact, only 52 per cent of the $1.7 billion estimated as needed under the regional response plan for Lebanon in 2014 was met.

It is of utmost urgency that the international community increase its humanitarian support to the Syrian refugees and to their host communities in neighbouring countries. But more importantly, there remains a need for the Council to live up to its duties in helping to bring about a political solution to the Syrian conflict. The reality is that, beyond the responsibilities of the Security Council as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, what is at stake today in Syria is our humanity.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): At the outset, I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Kang and High Commissioner Guterres for their briefings. Turkey appreciates the tireless work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to alleviate the suffering of the millions of displaced Syrians, as well as their advocacy in that regard.

I would like to share with the Security Council what Turkey has been doing in response to the Syrian

crisis. The humanitarian operations of the Turkish Government are carried out on three tracks. First, we maintain an open border policy and comply with the principle of non-refoulement. More than 1.6 million Syrians are now living in Turkey. More than 239,000 Syrians are registered in 25 shelters. All their needs, including food, non-food items, health and education services as well as psychological assistance, vocational training and social activities, are provided by the Turkish Government.

Secondly, to assist Syrians who live in various towns outside the shelters, we are taking measures to provide them with basic services, including free health care. In that respect, as a reflection of our strong commitment to humanitarian values and principles, the law on foreigners and international protection came into force in April 2014. Furthermore, the temporary protection regulation for Syrians came into force on 22 October 2014.

The third track pertains to extending humanitarian relief items to the northern parts of Syria. Turkey has continued to ensure that humanitarian relief reaches the northern parts of the country through the border's zero point, in conformity with its international obligations and in support of the United Nations campaign. The total value of the aid channelled to Syria through this type of operation is in the range of $365 million.

Lastly, as the Secretary-General's monthly reports have repeatedly stated, Turkey is also closely cooperating with the United Nations to enable the Organization's cross-border humanitarian operations to succeed in northern Syria.

As resolution 2191 (2014) and numerous monthly reports to the Council have suggested, the humanitarian needs in Syria remain enormous, and much more needs be done, especially in terms of scaling up cross-border and cross-line humanitarian assistance. Turkey will remain committed to continuing its contributions. However, we also need to be on the receiving side through burden sharing. The financial burden on the Government is currently almost $6 billion, whereas the total contributions we have received bilaterally and multilaterally so far stand at $300 million.

I must stress that the current situation is not sustainable, neither for Turkey nor for any other country in the region. Syria's neighbouring countries, including Turkey, have so far assumed an unfair share of the humanitarian burden of the Syrian crisis. They should not be left alone in coping with this humanitarian tragedy, which requires a genuine partnership among all members of the international community. That partnership has to include addressing the needs of Syrians who have been forcefully displaced, building the resilience of host communities and increasing resettlement efforts, while at the same time bearing in mind the future human resources needs of Syrian society for the sustainable development of post-conflict Syria.

We are gravely concerned by the continuing deterioration of the situation in Syria and increasingly feel the strain of the current state of chaos. Instability in the region — and the terrorist organization Daesh in particular — represents a threat to international peace and security. On this occasion, let me express our strongest condemnation on the recent abduction of Syrian Christians, as well as other barbaric acts committed by Daesh.

In that regard, the international community needs a comprehensive and coordinated strategy with political, security and humanitarian pillars. The international community has to make the crisis in Syria a shared priority and address the root causes of the problem in order to bring about a genuine political transition based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) through the establishment of a transitional governing body with authority to exercise full executive powers. On 15 March we will mark the fifth year of this crisis. It is high time for the international community to act.

I will refrain from taking Council members' valuable time by responding to some of the accusations and statements made against us. As we have done in the past, we will continue to stand by the Syrian people in these difficult times.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.